



Inside Congress

by United States Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr.

For the week ending September 13, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

AMERICA MUST LEAD THE WORLD TO LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

One year ago on September 11, our country suffered unexpected and unjustified attacks that killed and injured innocent people from many nations of the world. While the attacks occurred in the city of New York, a peaceful field in Pennsylvania and at the Pentagon in Virginia, the effects of terrorism were felt in every corner of America and throughout the world of nations that shared our sorrow.

The resulting war on terrorism has called together the people of America to unite behind a commitment to defend our homeland and preserve our way of life against all enemies of freedom and liberty. In doing so, America has witnessed a heartening resurgence of patriotism, a deep appreciation for the ordinary heroes among us, a fervent call to prayer, and a thankful devotion to the simple blessings of family, community, faith and friendship. We are indeed a blessed people, committed to liberty for individuals and nations everywhere, but mindful that freedom too often comes with great sacrifice. Who can doubt our American faithfulness and resolve as we grieve for those who lost life on September 11, applaud the brave government servants and military might of our great nation, strive for economic stability and quietly pray for a peaceful world free of tyrants and violence?

The United States is no stranger to evil--our forefathers have overcome it through the 225 years of our proud history. The challenge for this and future generations will be to never succumb to the temptation of withdrawing from our national obligation to resist evil and fight for freedom for future generations of Americans. The war against terrorism, memorialized in those who died one year ago, is only the latest test of our national resolve. In lasting memory of September 11, let the legacy of this new century be one of victory for mankind as the United States of America leads the world to liberty and justice for all.

OPTIONS FOR KEEPING STATE PARKS OPEN

I met with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials in my Washington, D.C., office Tuesday to discuss federal funding options for four Eastern Washington state parks in

danger of being closed due to the state's budget cuts. The parks, Crow Butte, Lyons Ferry, Central Ferry and Chief Timothy, are leased on Corps of Engineers land along the Columbia or Snake Rivers. The State Parks and Recreation Commission has said it plans to close these parks in order to whittle \$750,000 off of its shrinking budget.

Two weeks ago I met with county commissioners from Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Whitman and Walla Walla Counties. They told me one of their top priorities is to keep southeastern Washington's state parks open. With the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial celebrations beginning next year, I agree that this is vitally important. If these parks close, the result would be \$15 million in economic losses to southeast Washington.

After reviewing the options for the parks, I believe residents and visitors will be happiest if the state continues to manage the parks for two primary reasons. First, the state is better equipped to continue to manage these parks and their amenities. Second, if the state lets its lease lapse, but then tries to renew the lease at a later date, it may find it cannot meet the stringent environmental regulations and requirements of the Corps.

The most feasible solution is to reprogram funds within the state budget, and I wrote to Gov. Locke to suggest that while he is in Eastern Washington this week, he visit Clarkston and discuss the issue with community members who will be most affected by the park closures.

These parks mean a great deal to Eastern Washingtonians, and I think Governor Locke would benefit from hearing what the people on the ground have to say about the devastating effects park closures would have on their communities.

WORKING WITH CUBA TO FIGHT THE FLOW OF DRUGS TO THE U.S.

This week the House Appropriations Committee agreed to \$16 billion in foreign operations spending. This funding goes to fight the spread of AIDS/HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria, funds Child Survival and Health Programs, funds development assistance, international disaster assistance, peacekeeping operations, international narcotics control, and help for the people of Afghanistan to rebuild their war-torn country.

I offered an amendment to this bill with regard to international narcotics control to clarify that the United States can continue to cooperate with the Government of Cuba on drug interdiction efforts. Stopping the flow of drugs in the Caribbean is a common security interest of the U.S. and Cuba and I was concerned that the original language included in the bill would have stopped the case-by-case cooperation that presently occurs with Cuba. More than 10 percent of the cocaine that is shipped to the United States is smuggled through the waters around Cuba. I argued that discontinuing cooperative counter-drug efforts because of political differences was extremely short-sighted and was pleased that my amendment was adopted.

FARM BUREAU AWARD FOR --- YEAR IN A ROW

I am proud to have received the American Farm Bureau Federation's "Friend of the Farm Bureau" award for the 107th Congress. I have received this award every term I have served in Congress. The award is given to Members of Congress who have supported Farm Bureau issues and are nominated by their respective state Farm Bureaus.

LEGISLATION

This week I introduced **H.R. 5379** to address a problem with fluctuating PILT funding to counties. PILT, or Payments in Lieu of Taxes, is a program started by Congress at the turn of the century that compensates counties for Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management property within county boundaries. PILT was started because counties could not raise revenue through property taxes on federal land like it could on private land, though the counties provide services to these federal lands. Over the years, these federal payments have been very important for local education, road maintenance and general county budgets because those are programs that a county would normally fund from private property taxes.

Over the last decade however, the government's shared receipts payments have declined drastically, making it next to impossible for counties to budget for the public services they provide. Congress tried to fix the problem in 2000, but the new law ended up causing more uncertainty for counties. This is why I introduced legislation to fix this error. Passage of this bill would restore the stability Congress originally intended to give counties. A companion bill was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico.

This week I agreed to cosponsor legislation to **sunset the Helms-Burton Act**, the basis for much of the onerous regulatory regime on U.S.-Cuban relations. Ending the current law is intended to force a debate over the merits of the policy. While perhaps some elements of the Helms-Burton law should be maintained, it should be subject to a congressional reexamination.

I, along with the majority of my colleagues in the Northwest, signed a letter to Energy Secretary Spence Abraham expressing my concern with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's proposed Standard Market Design for electricity markets throughout the nation.

ON THE FLOOR

Here is a recap of the legislative activity for the week:

H.Con.Res. 464, Expressing the Sense of the Congress on the Anniversary of the Terrorist Attacks Launched Against the United States on September 11, 2001. I was an original cosponsor of this resolution that passed unanimously.

This resolution recognizes September 11 as both a day to remember those taken from their families, loved ones, and fellow citizens and a day for Americans to recommit to the Nation, to their freedoms, and to each other. The Congress extends its deepest sympathies to the countless innocent victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, their families, friends, and loved ones. We honor the heroic actions of first responders, law enforcement personnel, State and local officials, volunteers, and others who aided the innocent victims and, in so doing, bravely risked their own lives and long-term health. We recognize the Congress stands in great debt with the American people and to the members of the Armed Forces serving both at home and abroad. We praise the people of the United States for their patriotism, compassion, prayers, and generosity in donating time and money to support the innocent victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, their families, friends, and loved ones.

The resolution expresses the thanks and gratitude of Congress to the foreign leaders and citizens of all nations who have assisted and continue to stand in solidarity with the United States against terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The Congress discourages, in the strongest possible terms, any effort to confuse the war on terrorism with a war on any people or any faith. We commend the President and the brave servicemen and women of the United States Armed Forces in the successful effort to oust the Taliban from power. We express the resolve of Congress to pursue all those responsible for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and their sponsors until they are discovered and punished. We reaffirm that Congress will honor the memory of those who lost their lives as a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and will defend bravely the citizens of the United States in the face of all future challenges.

SCHEDULE

Robyn Meenach, vice president of Washington Farm Bureau and Barb Gady of Rockford met with me at my office to discuss ag issues. I met with Dr. Terree Schmidt-Whelan, executive director of Pierce County Alliance and Priscilla Lisicich, executive director of the Safe Streets Campaign to discuss methamphetamine prevention and cleanup efforts. I met with Army Corps of Engineers officials to discuss options for keeping four Washington State Parks open in southeast Washington. Anne Koepsell of Hospice of Spokane met with me at my office to discuss Medicare issues. I met with the Washington members of the National Association of Letter Carriers, including Steven Schultz.

I attended a meeting of the Cuba Working Group. The Appropriations Committee, of which I am a member, approved the FY2003 foreign operations spending bill. I met with members of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, including Bruce Nelson and

Gretchen Borck. I met with representatives of Grant County PUD including Commissioners Mike Conley, Vera Claussen and LaDell Yada, Manager Don Godard, and Christine Stallard.

This weekend I will return to the District for visits in Spokane, Wilbur and Newport.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

I always enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in any matter. Here are some of the ways you may reach me, especially if you know of others who may want to receive this report each week:

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